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# CRUMBS OF COMFORT

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# Crumbs of Comfort.

BY

MRS. F. A. NOBLE.



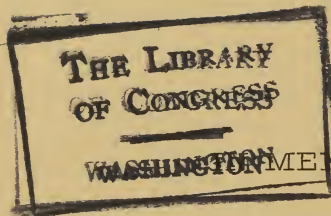
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MEMORY  
OF ONE BELOVED,  
WHO ENTERED INTO THE LARGER LIFE  
JULY 4, 1890.

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# Crumbs of Comfort.

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## LITTLE CHILDREN.

WHY do they come, these little ones that enter our homes by the gateway of suffering, and then linger with us a few months, uttering no words, smiling in a mysterious silence, yet speaking eloquently all the time of the purity and sweetness of heaven? Why must they open the tenderest fountains of our natures only to leave them so soon choked with the bitter tears of loss?

It is impossible wholly to answer such questions of the tortured heart, but one can say, in general, that these little temporary wanderers from a celestial home come and go because of the great love of God. It is an inestimable blessing to have been the parent of a child that has the stamp of heaven upon its brow, to hold it in

one's arms, to minister to it, to gaze fondly down into the little upturned face, and to rejoice in the unsullied beauty of its smiles, and then—to give it back to God at his call, with the thought that in heaven, as upon earth, it is still our own child, a member of the household still, to be counted always as one of the children whom God hath given us.

Such a love chastens and sanctifies the hearts of the father and mother, carries them out beyond time and sense, and gives them a hold upon the unseen. As things of great value always cost, it is worth all the sorrow to have known this holy affection and to have this treasure in heaven.

A little newspaper waif some years ago gave expression thus to the question of these grieving hearts :

“ Ah, little child with flowers in hand,  
Upon our earthly borderland,  
Lying in white dreams wonderful !  
Men deem it strange that thou shouldst cross  
Into a world so sorrowful  
To make it harder with thy loss.”

And then the poet, seeing that it was Christ's purpose that this

“Bud growing upon life's fairest tree”

should become a human soul and share in the blessed benefits of His death, adds,

“Fly home and make all heaven glad  
To see the welcome in His face,  
And rest thee, for that smile is sad,  
Upon His breast a little space  
Before the angel children greet  
Thee, comforted with looks most sweet,  
And wonder at the earthly year,  
The mystery of pain and tear,  
That lit thy deep and radiant eyes  
With meanings new to paradise.”

It is but a dreamer's picture, but it has comforted a little the sad hearts of those who strove to reach beyond the veil. It has in it the true thought of the omnipresent love of Him who said, “Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

“I'll meet the man in the world's rude din  
Who hath outlived his mother's kiss,  
Who hath forsaken her love, for sin ;  
I will be spared her pang in this.

“Man’s way is hard and sore beset ;  
Many must fall, but few can win.  
Thanks, dear Shepherd ! My lamb is safe,  
Safe from sorrow and safe from sin.”

MARY CLEMMER AMES.

BEST.

“Mother, I see you with your nursery light  
Leading your babies, all in white,  
To their sweet rest ;  
Christ, the Good Shepherd, carries mine to-night,  
And that is best.

“I cannot help tears when I see them twine  
Their fingers in yours, and their bright curls shine  
On your warm breast ;  
But the Saviour’s is purer than yours or mine,  
And that is best.

“You tremble each hour because your arms  
Are weak ; your heart is wrung with alarms  
And sore opprest ;  
My darlings are safe, out of reach of harms,  
And that is best.

“You know over yours may hang even now  
Pain and disease, whose fulfilling slow  
Naught can arrest ;  
Mine in God’s gardens run to and fro,  
And that is best.

“You know that of yours your feeblest one  
And dearest may live long years alone,  
Unloved, unblest ;  
Mine are cherished of saints around God’s throne,  
And that is best.

“You must dread for yours the crime that sears,  
Dark guilt unwashed by repentant tears  
And unconfessed ;  
Mine entered spotless on eternal years ;  
Oh how much the best !

“But grief is selfish ; I cannot see  
Always why I should so stricken be  
More than the rest ;  
But I know that, as well as for them, for me  
God did the best.”

H. H.

## THE LORD GAVE.



Not long ago two friends sat side by side, looking into each other's faces through falling tears, pain gnawing at each heart, but with their hands clasped in a common faith in a wise and loving Heavenly Father. There was a likeness in their sorrow, a likeness also in their consolation. From the younger woman, sunny-faced and still youthful, a child of rare loveliness had been recently borne in the Saviour's arms to the home above. The poet-friend who ministered to the bereaved circle not only directed their hearts to the "Christus Consolator," but he also spoke with tender emphasis upon the words of Job in his extremity, dwelling particularly on the expression, "The Lord gave." As in the interchange of sad confidences this was told to the other and older mother, she exclaimed, "Why it is the very thought in which I lived



all those dreadful days. It was not so much, the Lord taketh away, but the Lord *gave* me so many years of the dearest love, of blessed caring and being cared for, of sweetest companionship and intimacy. So great was the exultant gratitude for a gift so priceless, that rebellion at its recall was not even dreamed of at the time. In the shadows of the valley, awaiting God's will, the soul spontaneously met God's mandate with the response, 'Blessed be the name of the Lord !' "

Because this experience was so marked as well as so sustaining in the trial of these stricken friends, I have thought that other grieving hearts might possibly be lifted out of their gloom by the same remembrance.

When the Judge of all the earth recalls the precious gift he has put into our life, we are smitten with a sense of irreparable loss. The strong tides of friendly compassion flow into our desolated home because, when such treasure is taken, life can never again be what it has been. The eye will hunger and ache for the

dear face; the ear will crave the music of the voice that is still. The deep affection of our nature will not be silenced in its longing. Life must be readjusted. New lessons must be learned, of patience in tribulation, submission, and hope.

But to dwell wholly upon the *loss* is short-sighted, selfish, and ungrateful. Was it not the goodness of God, his undeserved love, that made the blessing ours at all? He gave the harmony of features and color and expression that formed the countenance we never tired of looking upon. He gave the sunny, unselfish, loyal heart, the quick perceptions, the noble purposes that constituted the character of one in whom we delighted. He gave all the years of development and closest companionship and helpfulness. He gave the quick, springing sympathy that understood without words. He gave all the fruitions of these dear family relationships which we believe have their prototype in the world beyond. He gave the spirit that could no longer tabernacle with the flesh, but, escaping from its en-

thralment, entered upon the blessed immortality.

The Lord gave, and we were not always mindful of his giving. It seemed so natural and lasting to be living side by side, talking and walking together, thinking, planning, working, enjoying, one and yet happy two. But this sweet experience is not granted to all. How many lonely lives there are! How many stand utterly alone! Even while there are family ties, how often the bond lacks tenderness and devotion! Two natures placed very near together may be antagonistic. Circumstances may build adamant walls of separation. There are homes into which no children have come to unseal the fountains of parental love. There are other homes into which they have brought care and disgrace.

If our memories are only of sunlight and cheer and strength; if we can recall only the qualities that made the beloved seem necessary to our own existence or helpful to the wider need of the world, let us not forget to say in

view of so much blessing, "The Lord gave all this to me, unworthy. Blessed be the name of the Lord!" Bearing sorrow thus in loving recognition of his goodness, we shall come in time to say also, "And the Lord hath taken away," in an equal love and wisdom. "Blessed be the name of the Lord!"

#### HER PHOTOGRAPH.

THIS is her shadow, nothing more :  
The eyes that wear no smile for mine,  
The silent lips that laughed before,  
The hair without its wave and shine,  
This mask that shows no spark divine.

How calm and cold it looks at me !  
Her eyes were full of shade and sun,  
A look that rippled like the sea  
Across whose breast the light winds run—  
A gleam, a cloud, a tale begun.

This is the veil her soul put on  
To run the weary ways of earth,  
And when her brief, bright race was won,  
She laid it down beside her hearth,  
A worn-out thing of little worth.

It is not she that fronts me here,  
This speechless aspect still and cold ;  
I knew her fair and sweet and dear,  
A clinging girl with heart of gold  
And hands that clasped with tender hold.

Was it a gentle prophecy,  
This slight, transparent mould of clay,  
To let the loving round her see  
How soon the soul must flit away  
That fluttered, paused, and made no stay?

“Not here, but risen !” Oh angel song  
Still falling soft on hearts that weep !  
This is the dead whose ashes long  
Her Master’s messengers shall keep  
Safe in earth’s last undreaming sleep.

But she who wore this mortal guise  
Has fled beyond our tearful sight ;  
Joyful and strong, serene and wise,  
She lives upon the hills of light,  
And waits us on that heavenly height.

ROSE TERRY COOKE.

## THE BETTER COUNTRY.



“THAT is the heavenly.” Such is the teaching in the Epistle to the Hebrews. “The city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God,” stood out before the eye of faith in glory almost as tangible as the beautiful city of Jerusalem, the joy of the Jewish heart. There is comfort and healing in the thought, as if balmy breath came down to the soul from the everlasting hills. The beloved who are with the Lord have not gone out into an unknown land whither our hearts are forbidden to follow. We are not left in ignorance of their state. It is a country, and a better country, in which they are dwelling.

Would life be so very bitter if a dear one were in a foreign land, even for a long term of years? Undeniably, absence would bring loneliness and pain. Life would not be so rich and joyous as if he were near, entering into our

plans, sharing in our success, sympathizing with our defeats. But if it were greatly for his good, bringing him wealth and beneficial connections with those whom it is an honor to know, and especially adding much to his happiness, should we try to keep him in the narrow round of our own little hamlet, or spend our days in murmuring rebellion because we could not see him or hear him speak? We should still hold him dear, and send daily across the wide waters our yearning messages of love. Those among whom he walked in the unseen land would rise before our imagination with a personality more and more distinct as we should be taught concerning their manners and customs. The unknown land, because it held one whom we knew and loved so much, would become a part of our own world. We should dwell with the absent one and he with us. We see this in the case of our missionary mothers. Their children go abroad for a lifetime. They may meet again once or twice or thrice, and yet each farewell is as if it were the last. It is a new relinquishment of all



the delights of personal presence, sweet ministry, and frequent interchange of thought and affection. But as the missionary carries to China or Africa an unfading picture of the old home and the dearest friends, the mother's heart sets forth her canvas and begins to paint the little foreign house, the strange people that gather to it for instruction, and the varied service in schools and native homes and strange tourings in the name of the Lord Jesus. The jinrikisha is scarcely less familiar than the phaeton, the compound or the kraal than our own door-yard, or the tall palm-tree than the elm or maple of our highway.

So it is in regard to our friends in the Better Country. They live as truly as if they were here or in Europe. They praise God, and they also serve him. They love with a purity and depth of tenderness infinitely beyond the sweetest of that love we knew and miss so sorely.

“They watch with God the rolling hours  
With other, larger eyes than ours,  
To make allowance for us all.”



Only the pain and burden of the earthly life are eliminated from their experience. Whatever was truly beautiful and joyous and serviceable is still a part of their nature, and theirs is indeed the fulness of life.

The Better Country is one of unspeakable delight. Prophets and apostles and poets have heard its music and had visions of its glory. Human language has struggled to make known that for which it has no adequate symbol. But the Apocalypse, and hymns like St. Bernard's and George Herbert's and Wesley's and Faber's, lead our halting thoughts towards its shining boundaries. Nothing that the emancipated spirit can desire is wanting. Beauty of cloud or tree or flower, of form or color, of ravishing harmony, of exquisite texture, is found there in an affluence of which that we have here is but a suggestion. There are friendships and unembarrassed communion of souls. There is the fountain of truth ever open to the eager mind, and those who drink from it go away satisfied. The Lord of that country is always near:

“That where I am there ye may be also.” Loving eyes behold his glory. Adoring hearts meet him in that oneness for which he prayed to the Father. Satisfaction, peace, blessedness, is the atmosphere of this Better Country.

Are these things truly so, or are they merely a poet’s dream? According to God’s Word they are true, only falling far short of reality. According to the instinctive belief of the soul they are also true.

“O friends, no proof beyond this yearning,  
This outreach of our souls, we need;  
God will not mock the hope He giveth;  
No love He prompts shall vainly plead.”

According to the reasoning of the strongest and clearest philosophical minds, they are solid fact instead of sentimental hope and desire. Those who died to our sight, having walked with Christ here, have risen in newness of life, in freedom and power, in gladness and triumph, into immortality in the heavenly place. The grave has never even received them. Before the worn-out body was covered from our sight, the spirit we

loved, with its glorified body, entered the paradise of God. There it dwells, and thither must our thoughts and affections follow,

“Looking up and not down,  
Forward and not backward,”

seeking for ourselves also an abundant entrance into this Heavenly Country which holds those still identified with our life, and Him by whom death was conquered, our Redeemer and King.

“More homelike seems this vast unknown  
Since they have entered there ;  
To follow them were not so hard  
Wherever they may fare ;  
They cannot be where God is not,  
On any sea or shore ;  
Whate'er betides,  
Thy love abides,  
Our God, for evermore.”

#### THE HEAVENLY SECRET.

Does the dark and soundless river  
Stretch so wide—  
The homeward rolling tide  
Over which have crossed  
Our loved and early lost—

That their unsealed eyes may never see  
The further side  
Where still amid this coil and misery  
We bide?

Is the realm of their transition  
Close at hand  
To this our living land,  
Nearer than we dream?  
Can they catch the gleam  
Of our smiles, and hear the words we speak,  
And see our deeds,  
And, looking deeper than our eyes may seek,  
Our needs?

Do they mingle in our gladness?  
Do they grieve  
When ways of good we leave?  
Do they know each thought and hope?  
While we in shadow grope,  
Can they hear the future's high behest,  
Yet lack the power  
To lead us from our ills or to arrest  
The hour?

When they find us bowed with sorrow  
Do they sigh?  
Or when earth passes by  
For them do they forget  
The cares that here beset

Their well-beloved? Or do they wait  
    (Oh be it thus!)

And watch beside the golden gate  
    For us?

We are yearning for their secret ;  
    Though we call,  
    No answers ever fall  
    Upon our dullard ears  
    To quell our nameless fears.

Yet God is over all, whate'er may be,  
    And trusting so,  
Patience, my heart ! a little while, and we  
    Shall know.

GEORGE COOPER.

## CHERISHING OUR GRIEF.



THERE is a wide difference between cherishing our grief and cherishing the memory of those who have been taken away from us. In cherishing grief we become selfish, blind to other good still lavishly bestowed upon us, less mindful of the needs of those who should have our ministry in the home and the wide world of suffering, ignorance, and crime. "Was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow?" is the refrain of a heart that will not see the love and wisdom of the Holy Will. Such a grief gathers to itself that upon which it may feed. Anniversaries are its harvest days; sad memories are recalled and dwelt upon; lost hopes are magnified. Rebellion turns to doubt about God's care; and doubt, once admitted, poisons the whole inner life.

Doubtless there is often a fear of being dis-

loyal to the beloved dead. Even when kindly nature makes it evident that life can and must go on, and laughter once more stands waiting upon the threshold, there is almost a sense of duty in barring the door against cheerfulness and hope. Strange blindness of these human hearts! For whom do we honor by our repinings and remonstrance, our sad faces and tones, and by the whole epistle of our lives? Surely not our Father whom we call love, not the infinite wisdom, not the Scriptures with their revelations and promises, not the friends who have exchanged earth for heaven, care and pain for perfect felicity, weakness for strength, sinning for holiness, uncertainty for light and truth. Nor do we honor our own reason and fortitude, or our docility, or our Christian faith. To cherish our grief demoralizes both the physical and the spiritual nature.

But cherishing the remembrance of those who are gone may be a means of grace to ourselves and others. It may lift the soul into a new region of joy and do much to wean it from

the trivialities of the life we have hitherto led. It is possible to recognize and to strengthen a bond between the spirit in heaven and the spirit still in the flesh. Do you remember the three words in which Charles Kingsley "wrote the story of his life, past, present, and future"? *Amavimus, amamus, amabimus.* We may say not only *we have loved*, but *we love, we shall love.* My thought goes above and beyond this earthly horizon; I believe the thought of those I have in heaven comes down to me in my agony of bereavement. The sweet pity that so often found expression here cannot be quenched now that they see so much more clearly the desolation and bewilderment of my heart. Why may not those who do not forget us while they see Him face to face ask in their heaven-taught wisdom for blessings according to our need?

We may cherish the thought of a personality.

"Known and unknown, human, divine;  
Sweet human hand and lips and eye;  
Dear heavenly friend that canst not die,  
Mine, mine, for ever mine."



The spiritual body with the same lineaments made all beautiful and glorious, the same nature purified and enlarged, this is my friend in the Better Country. I may make more definite my thought of him as "keenly alive," without unrest, yet ever advancing, as of old a part of my life, but drawing me heavenward in a newly awakened tenderness and aspiration.

"They do not die  
Nor lose their mortal sympathy,  
Nor change to us although they change."

Some try to bear their grief by shutting out memories, crowding the life with duties so that no time is left for self-torture. Work is good, and, next to submission to God's will, is the best cure for sorrow. But with the work it is better to cherish the ideal, which is in the best sense real, than to stifle our holiest affections. It mellows and refines the character to cultivate the earnest conviction that those who are absent from our home are present with the Lord. It does not harm us, it may help us, to think of the family groupings in some of the many mansions

of the Father's house. Let our conversation be in heaven as literally as it is on earth.

The cherished memory and the continued clasp of the hand of one who has died in Christ may be a means of blessing in leading our desire beyond the one who at first filled all the heart. Loving and entering so far as the instructed imagination may do into the enjoyment and the service of one in heaven, we may be led by this friend we know into the blessed presence of Him "whom, not having seen, we love." There may be a subtle sympathy awakening a holy dissatisfaction even while we commune with the departed, until with them we fall in adoration at the Saviour's feet, praising him as the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely. It will be found to be a matter of Christian experience that the cherished love of one who is with Christ impels the soul to say, Whom have I in heaven but thee, my Lord? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.

Is not this the interpretation of a letter from

one who wrote: "Yield to the shadow, my dear friend, so that it may enwrap you in with the lost dear one in the Father's house. There is no comfort, no such comfort, elsewhere. It is out of the depth of the sorrow that comes the healing balm, or that will come by-and-by through abiding with grief. Then you will have strength to turn back to what remains, and the sense of regret will become a heavenly bond, and into the absence will glide the presence, and what has been lost will be in some better fashion restored to you. How else is it that our Lord could say, 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted'?"

The companionship and satisfaction we constantly crave need not be all in the future tense. Linked to heaven are we now and here, if we will only open our eyes to see, and cultivate, within the teachings of God's Word, the thought of "our glorified."

"And they we mourn are with us yet,  
Are more than ever ours,  
Ours by the pledge of love and faith,

By hopes of heaven on high,  
By trust triumphant over death,  
In immortality."

"NOT DEAD, BUT RISEN."

Lines from the Arabic.

He who died at Azim sends  
This to comfort all his friends.

"Faithful friends ! it lies, I know,  
Pale and white and cold as snow,  
And ye say, 'Abdullah 's dead !'  
Weeping at the feet and head.  
I can see your falling tears,  
I can hear your sighs and prayers;  
Yet I smile and whisper this :  
I am not the thing you kiss.  
Cease your tears and let it lie ;  
It was mine ; it is not *I*.

"Sweet friends ! what the women lave  
For the last sleep of the grave  
Is a hut which I am quitting,  
Is a garment no more fitting,  
Is a cage from which at last  
Like a bird my soul has passed.  
Love the inmate, not the room,  
The wearer, not the garb, the plume  
Of the eagle, not the bars  
That kept him from those splendid stars.

“Loving friends ! be wise and dry  
 Straightway every weeping eye :  
 What ye lift upon the bier  
 Is not worth a single tear.  
 'Tis an empty sea-shell—one  
 Out of which the pearl has gone ;  
 The shell is broken, it lies there ;  
 The pearl, the all, the soul, is here.

“'T is an earthen jar whose lid  
 Allah sealed, the while it hid  
 That treasure of His treasury,  
 A mind that loved Him ; let it lie !  
 Let the shard be earth's once more,  
 Since the gold is in His store !

“Allah glorious ! Allah good !  
 Now the world is understood ;  
 Now the long, long wonder ends :  
 Yet ye weep, my erring friends,  
 While the man whom ye call dead  
 Lives and loves you : lost, 't is true,  
 For the light that shines for you ;  
 But in the light ye cannot see,  
 In a perfect paradise,  
 And a life that never dies.

“Farewell, friends ! but not farewell :  
 Where I am ye too shall dwell.  
 I am gone before your face  
 A moment's worth, a little space.

When ye come where I have slept  
Ye will wonder why ye wept ;  
Ye will know by true love taught  
That here is all and there is naught.  
Weep a while if ye are fain—  
Sunshine still must follow rain—  
Only not at death, for death,  
Now we know, is that first breath  
Which our souls draw when we enter  
Life which is of all life centre.

“ Be ye certain all seems love  
Viewed from Allah’s throne above !  
Be ye stout of heart, and come  
Bravely onward to your home !  
La, il Allah ! Allah, la !  
O love divine ! O love alway ! ”

He who died at Azim gave  
This to those who made his grave.

EDWIN ARNOLD.

THE SEEN AND THE UNSEEN.

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IF Wordsworth in the quiet of his home in the lake district could say,

“The world is too much with us; late and soon  
Getting and spending we lay waste our powers,”

it is preëminently true of the ambitions and rivalries of the times in which we live. The world is with us whether we will have it or not. For ourselves and those providentially dependent upon us there must be the struggle to obtain food, shelter, clothing, and education. Homes must be kept clean and fresh and cheerful. Society makes its demands both reasonable and unreasonable. Cultivation of the God-given faculties, either literary or artistic, is one of the constraining fashions of the day, and even religion creates its own whirlpool of charities and church services of various kinds, until the poor soul has scant time for that quiet refreshment by heavenly communings without which it be-

comes of the earth earthy. All this is in accordance with man's estimate of what it is to live.

The divine estimate is very different: "Take no anxious thought; trust in the Lord and do good; seek those things that are above." Everywhere in God's Word we find the same lesson of subordinating this life to the next, earth to heaven, the seen to the unseen.

Nothing brings our wonted life to a standstill like an absorbing grief. When "the face of all the world is changed" by the removal of one who has been the light and joy of the home, the relation and value of here and there are changed also. When those we call our own are all about us, earth is strong and beautiful and satisfying. Heaven woos in vain. How often have loving hearts exclaimed, "I want no sweeter heaven than this dear home with its fulness of love and protecting care." But when He who sees both earth and heaven takes these precious ones to Himself, how different is the outlook, how changed the attraction! "For where the treasure is there will the heart be also."



A wise friend said to another from whom a part of herself had been sharply torn away, and who strove to say, "It is best for her," "Yes, and it is best for you also." "Undoubtedly," was the reply, "but I do not yet see how this can be. Patience, submission, duty, these remain, but no suggestion comes of fruition, and even should the peaceable fruits of righteousness afterward be mine, they must have the look and taste of that which is grown in the shade and chilliness of sorrow." Yet when the vacillating thought settled quietly and firmly towards the pole of God's great wisdom and love, when upon the foundation of revelation the city of heaven rose clear and resplendent out of the earth-mists of doubt and tears, this also was found to be true :

"For over my cleft heart  
Feel I an eternal life sweeping  
Since she died."

After a sorrow accepted and borne as from a Father's hand, the unseen becomes more real and lasting than the seen. We have learned as never before how uncertain are all earthly

pleasures and hopes; that the beautiful things are transient, the strong are undermined, the trusted sometimes deceive, cherished plans are ruthlessly destroyed. Then for the first time we can accept the divine measure of our earthly life. We admit that we are pilgrims and strangers here, and thank God for the eternal life beyond. New questions arise. Are my foundations strong? Is my house in order? Is this soul of mine preparing for everlasting habitation? Prayer cuts a deeper channel, and flows with more freshness and force towards the throne of God. It is fed by the underground stream of eager desires and hopes running beneath the daily and necessary tasks. God's Word is marvellously illuminated by sorrow. It is found to be all aflame with revelations concerning the unseen world and Him who is invisible. What depths of meaning are found in its familiar passages. "Heaven," indeed, "lies all about us," as we hear it read. We are finally brought into agreement with Paul when he says, "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but

grievous ; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby. For these light afflictions which are but for a moment work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; while we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

"Do you know the language of Canaan?" was the question asked by an eminent saint. When the beloved who have gone thither have drawn there also our reluctant thought and undying love, when we have learned to see them in the refulgent light of the unseen, when we have grown more and more into realization of their companionship with the Master and his glorified ones, and our reverent imagination follows them in the gladness of their new life of unwearying love-service, do we not know something of the language of that land "beyond the swelling flood"?

Earth has its sweetness and glory, but after

sorrow has swept the heart, sunshine and flowers, green fields and bending trees, suggest the unfading and surpassing beauty of the country where our dear ones are, and where we hope to meet them in God's good time. Human friendships are no less sustaining and delightful, but we connect them with the blessed hereafter when the dross shall have been purged away. Life's duties are still to be carried on, but with a new uplook to the Father of our spirits for his inspiration and guidance. Trials are to be met and endured, but in the goodly fellowship of those who "made it manifest that they were seeking after a country of their own," for whom "God hath prepared a city." Thus through bereavement God's children are taught to be in the world but not of it, and to set their affections on things above.

## HERE AND THERE.

We sit beside the lower feast to-day,  
She at the higher.  
Our voices falter as we bend and pray ;  
In the great choir  
Of happy ones she sings and does not tire.

We break the bread of patience, and the wine  
Of tears we share ;  
She tastes the vintage of that glorious vine  
Whose branches fair  
Set for the healing of the nations are.

I wonder is she sorry for our pain ?  
Or if, grown wise,  
She, wondering, smiles and counts them idle, vain,  
These heavy sighs,  
These longings for her face and happy eyes ?

Smile on then, darling ; what God wills is best ;  
We loose our hold,  
Content to leave thee to the deeper rest,  
The safer fold,  
To joy's immortal youth, while we grow old ;

Content the cold and wintry day to bear,  
The icy wave,  
And know thee in immortal summer there  
Beyond the grave,  
Content to give thee to the love that gave.

SUSAN COOLIDGE.

## “GOD WHO COMFORTETH.”

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“All that God wounds he constantly is healing,  
Quietly, gently, softly, but surely.”

How sweetly and unexpectedly the divine message often comes to us! It dropped from the reader's lips at evening prayers not long ago: “God, who comforteth them that are cast down, hath comforted us also by the coming of Titus.” It fell upon heart-soil that had been freshly ploughed and harrowed and was especially receptive of God's truth. Paul well knew what God can do and never fails to do for those who trust themselves to him. “Blessed be the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our affliction.” Blessed sorrow, light affliction indeed, that enwraps us still more tenderly in his thoughtful care!

Paul was comforted, in part at least, by God's use of a human friend—“the coming of Titus.” This is the common experience. There is no time when a friend feels so inadequate as

in the presence of grief. The sanctity of sorrow, the hollowness of words, the utter loneliness in which the soul treads its wine-press, make one shrink from even the attempt at consolation. Whether voiced or not, it is felt that nothing less than Omniscient love and wisdom can pour balm into bleeding hearts. And yet God uses just these shrinking, stammering friends to help us through our hours of need. The pressure of the hand, the sympathy written on the face and vibrating in the tones, the tears that fall, the hearts that just *love* with unutterable pity, the eloquent flower, the relief from services that must be attended to, the patience that bears with the overstrained nature, the generosity that anticipates every want, in all these and many other ways God comforts, through friends, those that are cast down.

I have been looking over a precious bundle of letters, all written in view of one of God's dealings with his children. They are from the East and the West, the North and the South, from dwellers by the sea and in the mountains,



from sight-seers in European capitals and toilers on missionary ground, from rich and poor, learned and simple, but they are all redolent of the tenderest and most delicate love and sympathy and strong with an up-bearing confidence in Him who is over all.

“Dead paper, mute and white !  
And yet they seem alive and quivering  
Against my tremulous hands that loose the string.”

They were God's messengers to make known the kinship of human hearts and the Christ-like impulse to help.

There came an anniversary day, the day of gladness to all Christendom, when little children shout for joy, and those who love them realize how much more blessed it is to give than to receive ; when older faces have an unwonted tenderness and radiance because of the affection that has devised some sweet surprise and enrichment. It was a dreaded day, promising only sad memories and an unusually bitter sense of lifelong loss. But how wonderful were the comforts of God through the



coming of friends! Friendly hands were used by the divine will to bear up those who were faint and ready to fall, and the dreaded day had its peculiar peace and even joy.

God who comforteth those who are cast down has caused much to be written for our solace and enlightenment. "What shall I read?" said one groping for light, to a beloved minister acquainted with sorrow by personal experience and long Christian service.

"The Bible," was his prompt reply.

Reaching out our hands in the darkness, we take hold of David's as he said, "I shall go to him, but he will not return to me;" and of Job's as he affirms, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Those ever-blessed words of our Lord in the beginning of the fourteenth chapter of John are never fully understood until we read them through the lens of tears. And Paul's words about the spiritual body shine in the gloom of bereavement like stars above a trackless waste. In John's vision we learn to see the New Jerusalem, having the glory of God,

where his servants serve him and see his face, and the Lord giveth them light, and they reign, tearless, painless, sinless, and rejoicing for ever and ever.

“And hope and faith the blest assurance give,  
We do not live to die ! We die to live !”

The Old Testament and the New abound in testimonies to the care and ministry of a Heavenly Father, his love when he chastens, and his sustaining grace.

But what gifts of consolation are scattered all along the centuries—by God’s will again through the hand of his chosen servants—that they may spring up and bloom around the feet of the pilgrim of to-day ! Thomas à Kempis says, “With humility and patience wait for the heavenly visitation ; for God is able to give thee back again more ample consolation.” It is only by the power of God that our pleasure-loving natures can find peace and joy in the thoughts and prayers of this devout soul, but to one who loves the holy Will they abound

in spiritual comfort. "A devout man," he says, "beareth everywhere about with him his own comforter, Jesus, and saith unto him, 'Be thou present with me, O Lord Jesus, in every time and place. Let this be my comfort, to be willing to lack all human comfort. And if thy comfort be wanting, let thy will and just proving of me be unto me as the greatest comfort, for thou wilt not always be angry, neither wilt thou chide for ever.'" Fénelon is very helpful with his seemingly absolute surrender to God and consequent serenity under discipline. This holy man says to us, "Happy they who are ready to accept everything, who never say it is too much, who depend not on themselves, but upon the Almighty, who ask only such measure of consolation as God wills to give them, and who live by his will alone." There are choice modern books written under the stress of great affliction, that, while they soothed and comforted the questioning soul of the writer, perpetuated his consolation for those sure to follow in the same thorny and bewildering road. To

how many have they been as God's angel of deliverance in the mists and darkness of grief !

And the poets ! "He giveth songs in the night." Some of the singers long ago ceased from their labors, but their music lingers as one of God's streams of comfort for those that are cast down. There is that hymn of Julius Sturm :

"Pain's furnace heat within me quivers,  
God's breath upon the flame doth blow,  
And all my heart in anguish shivers  
And trembles at the fiery glow ;  
And yet I whisper, 'As God will !'  
And in his hottest fire hold still."

The great value of "In Memoriam" can never be fully known until it is read as it was written, with yearning desire for the light of truth upon a great mystery. Our Whittier and Longfellow and Lowell, Rose Terry Cooke, Susan Coolidge, and H. H., and many poets less known, have embalmed their own discoveries of comforting grace in tender verse often used by God to soothe a soul in anguish.

It is by such means that the promised Com-

forter in part fulfils his mission, teaching, leading into the truth, taking of the things of Christ and revealing them unto our perplexed souls. But not all, perhaps not his sweetest, work is through human instrumentality. In the lonely stillness and seclusion, in hours when sleep will not come to tired eyes, beside the grassy mound sought only as a trysting-place between earth and heaven, the whisperings of the blessed Spirit bring strength and peace and even joy. It is the Spirit that tells us of God's unerring love, of heaven's nearness, of life's bitterness escaped, of the new capabilities, of the blessedness of seeing the Master. He reminds us of the brevity of our own life. He makes us glad in the thought, and prompts such prayer and effort as we never knew before, that we may be made fit to be received into the heavenly home. It is by the silent power of the Comforter that we are moved at last to say, "Thy will be done." Only his voice can still the storm of the soul. Only he can put down its re-

bellion and bring it into loving subjection. "God who comforteth," and "The Comforter!" Paul was simply in accord with his Lord when he testified to that which had been wrought in him. Would that all who mourn might lift their wounded hearts to this God of all comfort and find the consolation he never delays to bring.

"Himself hath done it! Then I fain would say,  
Thy will in all things evermore be done;  
E'en though that will removes whom best I love,  
While Jesus lives I cannot be alone.

"Himself hath done it! precious, precious words!  
Himself, my Father, Saviour, Brother, Friend,  
Whose faithfulness no variation knows,  
Who having loved me loves me to the end."

HELGA VON CRAMM.







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